

News From_____

For immediate release

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**Remarks by U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd
on the National Laboratory Designation of the Federal Energy Technology Complex
December 10, 1999**

I have long been an advocate of programs that encourage the more efficient use of fossil fuels. America is the greatest nation on the earth. Its power and influence are almost without historical parallel. But our continued strength ultimately depends on the robust health of our domestic capabilities in technology development, manufacturing, communications, and transportation, and while the U.S. is currently enjoying the benefits of an expanding economy, we should all be keenly aware that this sustained growth demands ever increasing amounts of energy.

Over the years, the U.S. has wisely invested heavily in the research and development of many innovative, clean, and efficient technologies that will allow our nation to help meet those growing energy needs. Much of your work here at FETC is dedicated to that worthy goal. And I believe that the action being taken today to make FETC a national laboratory signals a recognition that fossil fuels must continue to be an important part of the energy reservoir both nationally and internationally well into the future. All of you at FETC are helping to light a pathway for the new era of energy use that will be important to ensuring a comfortable standard of living for our children and our children's children.

I have long contended that economic growth does not have to mean environmental retrenchment. We can both grow and protect our planet. As we in the United States strive to find new ways to keep our air clean, we can also help other nations to acquire the technologies that can bring about a global response to environmental threats.

With expanded research into the use of clean coal technologies, and by demonstrating and deploying these technologies, coal can continue to be a viable "cleaner and greener" fuel for power generation both here and abroad. Such American-made clean coal technologies pack a twin punch because they not only can provide a variety of positive benefits for the U.S., they also can allow other nations to develop in more environmentally friendly ways.

Many times I have stood against the tide and fought for increased federal support for this laboratory and for research and development of fossil fuels in general. I must admit to having had some pretty heated debates at Senate hearings on this matter, and to being frustrated by what I have felt has been too little attention to a critical component on our menu of domestic energy resources.

I am, therefore, delighted by this action today, and I commend Secretary Richardson for this significant expression of support for fossil fuels. As well, I congratulate all of you at FETC for your good work.

This Center, today designated by Secretary Richardson as the National Energy and Technology Laboratory, is finally receiving its well-deserved recognition as the newest jewel in the Department of Energy's crown, and — as I have known for a long time — as a West Virginia treasure.

As further proof of FETC's growing stature, the designation of this laboratory as the Strategic Center for Natural Gas Studies positions West Virginia well to help to pioneer new energy source opportunities as we peer into the next millennium. Natural gas is an important energy source for our nation *and* for our state.

If we are to continue to find new and better ways to strengthen our economy and protect our environment, we must also find ways to use fossil fuels cleanly. The skeptics will say that it cannot be done. But I believe that the talent, dedication, and know-how exist to solve our energy-ecology conundrum right here in West Virginia and right here at FETC. Your work in energy research can lead us to a brighter tomorrow. Do not listen to the skeptics.

As Plato said, "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

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